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PROGRAM First Line Report STATION WTOP Radio
CBS Network

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SUBJECT Bombing Operations in Beirut

JUDY MULLER: "First Line Report," news and commentary.

This is Judy Muller, CBS News.

October 1983, some 240 American servicemen were killed as they slept in their barracks at the Beirut Airport. The American response, outrage.

In the months that followed, the Administration warned repeatedly that it would take serious measures to prevent terrorist attacks against Americans. It now appears that one of those serious measures has seriously backfired.

According to congressional and Administration sources, a car bombing on March 8th that killed more than 80 people in a Moslem sector of Beirut was carried out by a Lebanese counter-terrorists group that had been working with the CIA. The sources say the CIA did not authorize the bombing, but even an indirect connection raises the same old troubling question. How do you fight people who fight dirty without becoming soiled yourself?

More, after this.

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MULLER: Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee last year, says he was informed that President Reagan had ordered the CIA to develop a small anti-terrorist effort in the Mideast.

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"My personal view," says Moynihan, was "good luck to them."

SENATOR DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN: I was in Beirut. I saw the tomb, if you will, of those 250 Marines. They're a great debt, and we had every reasonable right to be concerned about that kind of attack on our people.

MULLER: Senator Patrick Leahy is the current vice chairman of the Intelligence Panel. He says he understands the motivation, but not the method.

SENATOR PATRICK J. LEAHY: We do face a grave terrorist threat around the world, and the United States is going to be in a position where it can stop those terrorists. But we are not prepared to do that today because the intelligence agencies have not put the adequate resources in it, and their coordination is, quite frankly, lousy.

MULLER: The CIA is barred from using its own people in any type of assassination attempt, but the use of proxies, says Leahy, just invites trouble.

SENATOR LEAHY: Anytime that the United States thinks that they can somehow use another group to do their work for them, whether it's the Contras in Central America or any other group, you lose control. That group itself starts off on its own agenda, which may be different than ours.

MULLER: The White House has had no comment. But, Secretary of State Shultz has repeatedly made his feelings clear. In a speech about terrorism last December, Shultz talked about the universal law of self-defense. Quoting a passage in the Talmud, which says, "If one comes to kill you, make haste and kill him first."

Now this.

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"First Line Report." Judy Muller, CBS News.